Ohio's AI Policy Mandate and the New Proof-of-Learning Problem

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This week's clearest shift was governance: Ohio became the first state to require school districts to adopt formal AI policies, while other systems wrestled with guidance, transparency, and student voice. At the same time, AI tools became more workflow-specific — and the hardest questions moved to reliability, assessment, coaching, and proof of learning.

The lead — formal AI governance arrives

Ohio became the first U.S. state to require traditional public school districts, community schools, and STEM schools to adopt an official AI policy by July 1, backed by a state model policy covering AI literacy, ethical use, and data privacy [1]. Columbus City Schools CIO Christopher Lockhart's implementation advice is notably practical: secure superintendent-level backing, build a cross-functional working group that includes teachers, administrators, experts, and students, keep the policy general rather than naming tools, and plan for ongoing professional development as the technology changes [1].

> "If we're not teaching them the proper ethical safe way to use it, they're going to just be out there on their own." [1]

The same governance pressure is showing up elsewhere. New York City is proposing its first public high school focused on AI and computer science, but families and Panel for Educational Policy members are pushing back over unclear AI involvement, limited community engagement, and the lack of citywide AI guidance; the Education Department says guidance is expected in the coming weeks, followed by a 45-day feedback window [2].

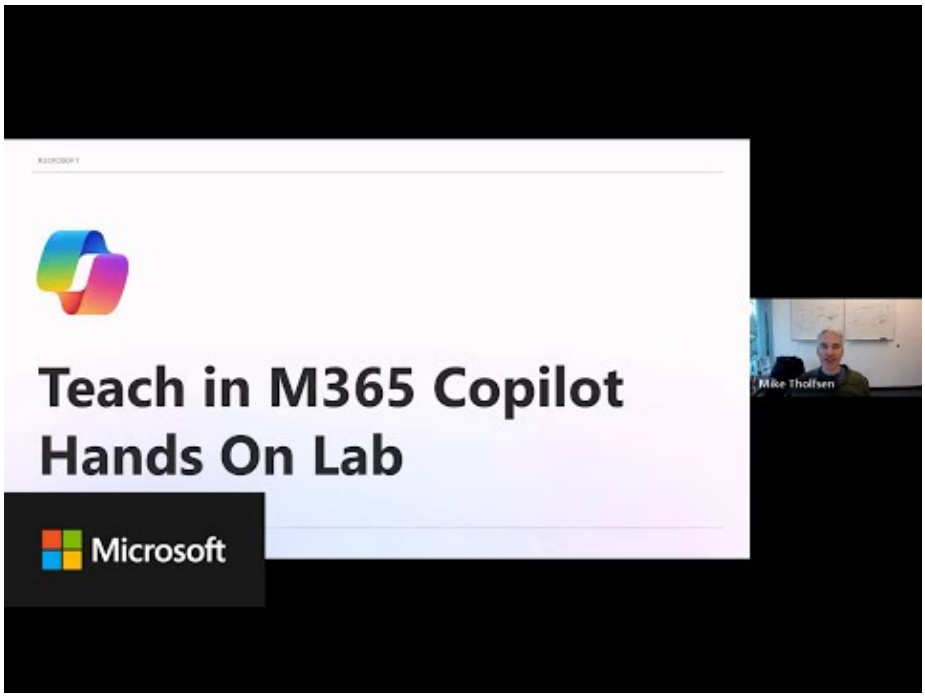
The broader lesson is that schools still do not have settled "best practices" to

copy. Justin Reich argues schools should adopt an **experimental mindset** and test policies and instructional practices with humility rather than pretend the right model is already known [3]. Lance Eaton makes a parallel point in higher ed: many classrooms are adapting, but institutions are hesitating, and students should be part of defining responsible use instead of being left to navigate inconsistent rules across courses [4].

Theme 2 — The tool stack is getting more specific about the learning job it serves

This week's most useful product news was less about generic chat and more about **purpose-built learning workflows**.

- **Microsoft Teach** is positioning itself as a single hub inside Microsoft 365 for lesson plans, quizzes, standards alignment, content modification, and study aids such as flashcards and fill-in-the-blanks [5]. It supports lesson planning from prompts or files, standards from 35+ countries, editable Word outputs, and Forms-based quizzes that can be used in Teams or an LMS [5]. **Boundary:** access requires an educator login and Copilot Chat; some study-aid features need grounding content rather than a loose prompt, and student self-creation is limited to users 13+ who have Copilot Chat access [5].



Hands-On: How to use the Teach Module in Microsoft 365 Copilot (2026) (1:11)

- **Lincoln AI** is being marketed as a curriculum-driven K-12 coach that guides inquiry rather than giving direct answers. It offers worksheet upload, voice or text interaction, teacher dashboards, safety alerts, and automatic adjustment to student Lexile/mastery levels [6]. **Boundary:** it is intentionally designed not to write essays or simply provide answers; Lincoln Learning also reports a 99.7% "no hallucinations" rate because the model is trained on its own curriculum [6].
- **NotebookLM** continues to expand its study workflow with ePub uploads, upgraded quizzes and flashcards, and custom infographic styles [7, 8, 9]. **Boundary:** a science-education audit found that broken EPA/NOAA URLs and image-only PDFs could appear as loaded sources with no warning, meaning a notebook may look grounded when it is not; the same audit said NGSS alignment still needs subject-matter verification and some 5th-grade material pulled from middle-school content [10, 11, 12, 13].
- **OpenAI's new interactive visual explanations** bring a different kind of learning support into ChatGPT: learners can manipulate variables and watch formulas and graphs change in real time across 70+ core STEM topics [14]. **Current scope:** the rollout begins with those 70+ STEM topics rather than a broader subject range [14].

Theme 3 — Reliability and proof of learning are the real bottlenecks

AI-powered cheating remains a live classroom problem. Chalkbeat notes that AI-powered cheating remains rampant and that most teens say peers cheat using AI at least "somewhat often" [15]. Teacher accounts this week describe students defaulting to AI for essays, homework, and even basic sentence-level work, pushing some teachers toward paper-based writing, in-class assessments, process grading, and student conferences to establish what work is actually theirs [16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22].

But a simple retreat to pen and paper is not a full strategy. Another Tech & Learning piece argues that banning AI repeats the old laptop debate: AI changes **when** thinking happens, so the more durable response is learning design that asks students to brainstorm, test ideas, revise drafts, critique outputs, and ask better questions [23]. Higher ed is running into the same issue from a different angle. One analysis argues that generative AI has exposed how much colleges rely on completion, grades, and polished outputs as proxies for learning; the proposed fix is explicit competencies, calibrated rubrics, and durable artifacts such as portfolios, capstones, clinical evaluations, and research presentations [24].

Some schools are answering the reliability problem by teaching verification directly. At Kensington Health Science Academy in Philadelphia, students built **Project FACTS** — "find out where a post is from, analyze it, challenge it,

think for yourself before you share" — into homeroom/advisory lessons, assemblies, and a student club tackling AI slop, medical misinformation, and political rhetoric [25].

Educators are also using imperfect media generators as literacy tools. One teacher experimenting with Google's **VEO** found its history and science clips inaccurate enough to become useful for classroom critique, including spotting historical mistakes and discussing deepfakes and misinformation [26]. **Boundary:** VEO currently sits behind Gemini Pro at $19.99/month with three video prompts per day, requires much more specific prompting than text chat, and that teacher said they would share teacher-generated videos rather than give students direct access [26].

Theme 4 — AI is moving into coaching, accessibility, and system operations

The most concrete system-level deployment came from **Broward County Public Schools**, which said it rolled out 20,000 Microsoft 365 Copilot licenses to staff and teaching-and-learning teams [27]. Teachers report using Copilot to complete assignments more quickly and reinvest time in differentiated support and challenge [27]. Students are also building with it: one student created an AI agent to help seniors understand graduation requirements, enrollment steps, and reminders for students, parents, and counselors [27]. Beyond teaching and learning, district leaders estimate a conservative $40 million to $50 million in facilities savings over five years from AI-assisted analysis of inefficient operations [27].

That same pattern — AI handling structured support so humans can focus on higher-value interaction — appears in adult learning too. New York City Public Schools' partnership with BetterUp offers optional human and AI coaching to central-office staff; some younger leaders prefer AI role-play because it feels like a safe, nonjudgmental space, and leaders report stronger work products and stronger connections between central offices and schools [28]. Andrew Ng argues this broader division of labor is likely to matter: when AI or digital media take on more content delivery, teachers can spend more time on social-emotional support and more child-centered experiences [29].

In higher ed, Notre Dame's evaluation of **Meta smart glasses** shows what accessibility-first AI can look like in practice. A PhD student with a visual impairment used them to identify ingredients, medicine, and mail, translate Korean instructions, summarize Latin texts, and explore ways to route captured text to a Braille device [30]. **Boundary:** translation output is still clunky, film-production experiments ran into phone tethering and short recording limits, and privacy concerns remain around recording people and exposing sensitive documents [30].

Are Wearables The Next Big Thing in Higher Ed Tech? | Shop Talk (9:08)

What This Means

- **For K-12 leaders:** policy is becoming infrastructure, not paperwork. Ohio's mandate and NYC's debate suggest districts will need living AI governance with student voice, general principles, and frequent administrative updates rather than school-board policies tied to today's tool names [1, 2].
- **For buyers and edtech teams:** specificity is winning over generic chat. Lesson planning, worksheet coaching, standards alignment, study aids, and visual explanations are more actionable than all-purpose assistants — but only if products make grounding, grade-level control, and guardrails visible to the user [5, 6, 10].
- **For assessment design:** the question is shifting from **"Did the student submit something polished?"** to **"What can the student actually demonstrate?"** That points toward process evidence, live explanation, portfolios, and performance artifacts rather than overreliance on AI detection alone [24, 21].
- **For tutoring and coaching:** the strongest upside still appears to be structured support with humans in the loop. Ethan Mollick points to large impacts from AI tutoring in World Bank work in Nigeria and Turkey and

says the opportunity is big enough to justify policy attention, especially in settings where teachers remain part of the system [31].

- **For self-directed and lifelong learners:** the promising pattern is deliberate practice, not content dumping. Duolingo says short daily sessions beat cramming, close-reading notebooks keep questions attached to context, and newer coaching and visualization tools appear most useful when they extend practice rather than replace it [32, 33, 28, 14].

  "The future belongs to schools that use AI to amplify teachers, not sideline them." [34]

Watch This Space

- **Will other states follow Ohio?** The combination of formal mandates, pending district guidance, and moratorium pressure suggests AI governance is moving from optional to expected [1, 2].
- **Can AI tutor and coach systems prove impact at scale?** Products like Lincoln AI are getting more structured, while Mollick is calling for public or nonprofit investment in universal tutoring systems rather than leaving the field entirely to commercial actors [6, 31].
- **Will source-grounded study tools fix validation gaps as they expand formats?** NotebookLM is adding ePub support and better flashcards, but the audit shows grounding UX is now mission-critical [7, 8, 10, 12].
- **Will accessibility use cases push wearables into mainstream education workflows?** Smart glasses already show promise in reference work, translation, and lab support, but privacy and accuracy norms are unresolved [30].
- **Will student-led AI literacy programs spread?** Project FACTS offers one concrete model for teaching students to question sources, algorithms, and AI-generated media rather than only banning tools [25].
- **Will evidence-building become a bigger part of edtech scaling globally?** Latin America's Brilla competition is a useful signal: Umaximo and Swarmob used funding and mentoring to run studies, build certifications, and strengthen AI-enabled products before broader expansion [35].

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